House Leader Offers Plan to End Assassination Inquiry Deadlock

By MARTIN TOLCHIN
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WASHINGTON, Feb. 25—House Majority Leader Jim Wright offered a proposal today to break the deadlock between Representative Henry B. Gonzalez, chairman of the House Assassinations Committee, and Richard Sprague, the staff director whom Mr. Gonzalez has dismissed, but who has the support of the rest of the committee and has refused to quit.

"If either one of them walks off in a huff, that's the end of the investigation," said Mr. Wright. "I've been trying to piece together with chewing gum and baling wire a compromise so that the committee can carry out its mission."

Neither Mr. Gonzalez, who is home in San Antonio with influenza, nor Mr. Sprague has accepted Mr. Wright's recommendations. They include a proposal that the committee's staff be reduced, which Mr. Sprague has previously resisted, and his agreement to work with Kenneth Brooten, appointed by Mr. Gonzalez to succeed Mr. Sprague as staff director. In return, Mr. Wright has proposed that Mr. Sprague remain on the committee staff.

"I hope I've got them both in a mood to accept certain things," Mr. Wright said.

The House Administration Committee has suspended payment of salaries and other expenses of the assassinations panel until it is assured that they total no more than the monthly limit of $84,000. Mr. Wright said that salaries alone totaled $82,000.

Mr. Gonzalez dismissed Mr. Sprague on Feb. 10th, but was blocked by other members of the committee who said that Mr. Gonzalez lacked the authority to make the dismissal, which reposed in the committee.

The committee members are believed to resent what they consider Mr. Gonzalez's usurpation of their powers. They also have expressed respect for Mr. Sprague. Mr. Gonzalez has described him as "deceitful."

The resulting deadlock has imobilized the committee, which was appointed to investigate the assassinations of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.